

Cambodia: Summary Report

The Impact of Informal School Fees



About Asia South Pacific Education Watch Initiative

The critical state and ailing condition of education in many countries in Asia-South Pacific region compels serious and urgent attention from all education stakeholders.

Centuries of neglect, underinvestment in education, corruption, and inefficiency by successive governments in the countries of the region have left a grim toll in poor education performance marked by low school attendance and survival rates, high dropout and illiteracy rates, and substandard education quality.

Moreover, there are glaring disparities in access to education and learning opportunities: hundreds of millions of impoverished and disadvantaged groups which include out-of-school children and youth, child workers, children in conflict areas, women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, dalit caste and other socially discriminated sectors, remain largely unreached and excluded by the education system.

Hence they are denied their fundamental human right to education and hindered from availing of the empowering and transformative tool of quality, life-long learning that could have equipped them to realize their full human potential, uplift their living conditions, and participate meaningfully in governance and in decisions that affect their lives.

At Midway: Failing Grade in EFA

In the year 2000, governments and the international community affirmed their commitment to quality Education for All (EFA) and Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). Midway to target year 2015, government assessments of EFA progress reveal that education gaps and disparities persist, and education conditions may even be worsening as indicated by shortfalls and reversals in EFA achievement.

The landmark year 2007 therefore presents a timely opportunity for civil society networks to engage governments in addressing the unmet EFA goals and MDG education targets, especially for disadvantaged groups.

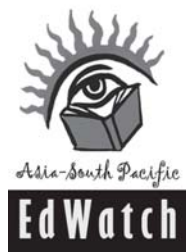
Real World Strategies

Spurred by the challenge of pushing for accelerated progress towards EFA, the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) launched the Real World Strategies (RWS) programme to undertake realistic and practical initiatives based on the actual conditions, experiences, and aspirations of people in communities.

(Continued on inside back cover)

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The **Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE)** is a regional association of organisations and individuals working towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, life-long adult education and learning. It strives to forge and sustain an Asia-Pacific movement dedicated to mobilizing and supporting community and people's organizations, national education coalitions, teachers unions, campaign networks, and other civil society groups and institutions in holding governments and the international donor community accountable in meeting education targets and commitments, ensuring the right of all to education, and upholding education as an empowering tool for combating poverty and all forms of exclusion and discrimination, pursuing sustainable development, enabling active and meaningful participation in governance, and building a culture of peace and international understanding.

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Asia-South Pacific Education Watch Initiative and Publications

These publications are the result of education watch processes initiated and pursued since 2006 by the RWS programme of ASPBAE and GCE, in partnership with national education coalitions from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.

Building on the successful Education Watch model implemented by CAMPE in Bangladesh, the Asia-South Pacific Education Watch (EdWatch) was designed and coordinated by the RWS Steering Committee composed of ASPBAE, Education International, and Global March Against Child Labor, and the RWS Asia Pacific staff.

EdWatch has emerged as an independent, citizen-based monitoring mechanism for assessing the status of education at the regional, national, and local levels, providing well-founded bases for advocacy and education campaign work and strengthening CSO capacities for policy engagement in education. It is designed to track governments' progress in achieving quality education for all, with focus on addressing the education deficit for disadvantaged sectors.

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The Impact of Informal School Fees

A. The Problem and its Scope

A child's right to a basic education is a universal human right. However, parental perception of the value of education can be conditioned by economic status and by their own educational attainment. Economically advantaged and well-educated parents tend to be able to access high quality education and have come to expect that their children will be educated to a high degree. Economically disadvantaged parents may expect their children of school age to work to supplement the family's income. These parents often have to place the immediate survival needs of their family ahead of schooling; they may also have to place a different value on the long-term benefits of education. This often results in higher rates of early school dropouts among poor and disadvantaged children.

Decisions about whether to keep children in or out of school are easier to make if there is an additional economic strain on the parents to keep their children in school. Education is now expected to be "free" but across most of the developing world, the pace of change and the recent provision of basic education means many countries have struggled to meet all costs. Whilst the state provides many elements of education, the burden still falls on parents or guardians to provide a large amount of the costs associated with accessing education.

While these costs can seem negligible, when added together, they can pose an insurmountable barrier for families. There are other effects. When charging informal school fees is basically a covert practice, there are few transparent reasons children are dropping out or repeating grades. Instead, children are given a message that they are not intelligent and not deserving enough to get an education. Many children are therefore denied access to the education that could help lift them out of poverty.

One of the biggest problems cited in education in Cambodia are low survival rates for grades 1 to 9. As stated in the National Strategic Development Progress Report for 2006, "these unwanted trends were

attributable to a high level of repetition and dropout at these two levels.” There has been a very slight rise in enrolment rates for basic education recently, coming soon after a more worrying decline. However, repetition rates (how often a pupil has to repeat a grade) are high, and dropout rates (also known as survival rates) are also unacceptably high. The repetition of grades and dropout are referred to as “flow-through” in this report – literally what is needed to ensure that people move through the education system in a way that meets the needs of the individual.

Only 51% of boys and 34% of girls complete primary school.[1] Not only is this rate very low, but in a country where 39% of the population is under the age of 14, it becomes even more crucial that this generation is adequately educated and equipped to deal with the challenges of the next few decades of growth.

The challenges for the education sector in Cambodia are enormous. The government has worked hard to establish a realistic pro-poor national education plan, the Education for All (EFA) National Policy 2003-2015.[2] However, the implementation of this plan still falls far below target.

One of the targets set out in the EFA is the abolition of informal payments by the end of 2008. As this and other research indicates, four years into the 12-year EFA plan, schools in Cambodia are still demanding financial contributions from each child and these fees are rising rather than falling. While these financial contributions may vary across schools, the fact remains that children who cannot afford to pay the “informal school fees” are at much higher risk of failing or dropping out of school early. [3]

In undertaking this research we are also mindful of the problems facing the thousands of dedicated teachers in Cambodia, who work hard to provide education in difficult circumstances. The salaries paid to teachers in Cambodia are extremely low and there is no intention to blame teachers for collecting “informal fees” in an education system that not only tolerates this practice, but relies on it to function.

Since 2000, the Royal Government of Cambodia, (RGC) in cooperation with NGOs and donors, has undertaken a process of education policy reform aimed at providing education services to all Cambodian children. The RGC has developed its own 12-year national EFA plan that was the basis for the further development of the 5-year Education Strategic Plan and the one-year rolling Education Sector Support Program (ESSP). [4], [5]



Ms. Muong Sophea, NEP local partner in Takeo province, interviewing a family in Tramkok district, Takeo province, Cambodia to collect information on informal school fees at the local public school.

Under the ESSP, the Priority Action Program (PAP), which is the financing mechanism for the program priorities, was developed to channel the government's education fund. This education fund is meant to provide free basic education, up to grade 9. Despite the government's support, parents still pay part of the education costs to keep their children in school. As the State's budget is officially considered 'adequate' to cover the cost of free education, the parental financial contribution is known as "informal school fees." These informal fees are used to both supplement the low teacher salaries paid by the State, as well as some operating costs where State funding is not yet sufficient.

B. Building on Previous Studies

A prior study of costs of education in Cambodia was undertaken by Mark Bray in 1999. In his study he suggests that:

“...the scale of dropout from Cambodian primary schools has been demonstrated to be high. Costs appear to be an important factor for many households when making decisions to withdraw their children from school.”

In that study, parents' expenditure for primary education ranged from 50,000 to 255,000R (\$12.5 to \$64) per child, per year for grade 1,

increasing to anywhere from 224,000 to 507,000R (\$56 to \$127) for grade 6, depending on where the family lives. This per-child contribution represented from 5.3% to 20.4% of the yearly family income. [7]

The objectives of this report, on the other hand, are to discover the amount of informal school fees being paid by parents in sending a child to school each year, the impact on household expenditure of keeping a child in school, and parental perceptions about paying these fees. While other studies have attempted to calculate the informal costs of sending a child to school in Cambodia, few have documented the impacts on families and household expenditures.

Given the demographic profile of a typical Cambodian family, with 5.7 children per family in urban and 5.3 per family in rural areas[8] the cost of sending all five children to school could well be beyond the ability of many families to pay. If a family had five children between the ages of six and fifteen the cost of educating all five children could consume in excess of 75% (and potentially up to 100%, depending on the area) of their total family income. Under these circumstances, difficult decisions have to be made about which children will stay in school, and which have to drop out to help support their families.

Much research points to the fact that, in many Cambodian families, the decision to send boys to school over girls is the most commonly used strategy in instances of economic shortage. According to the School Report of 14 developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region, "Must Do Better," Cambodia got a failing grade in gender equity because:

"girls constitute the huge majority of children out of primary and secondary schools and women comprise 7 out of 10 of adult illiterates." [9]



C. Education Watch Initiative

This second study was conducted to validate the findings of the first study. It is part of the Asia-South Pacific Education Watch, an independent, alternative, citizen-based assessment of the status of basic education at the regional, national and local levels designed to keep track of the progress in achieving the Education for all (EFA) goals.. This initiative seeks to strengthen advocacy to address the education deficit, which is often accounted for by children coming from poor and disadvantaged background, particularly girls. The undertaking is a cooperation among the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and the NGO Education Partnership (NEP). [10]

This research expands in scope a first study undertaken in February 2007 where one hundred families were interviewed from one province, Kampong Cham. Findings were broken down into urban (34 families) rural (29 families) and remote (37 families).

The findings from this bigger EdWatch research describes the situation in four provinces: Phnom Penh, Kampot, Takeo and Battambang.

- Phnom Penh is the capital city of Cambodia, with more than 1 million inhabitants. It is the cultural, political and economic centre. There is a growing level of manufacturing around Phnom Penh.
- Battambang is a large province, in the north-west of Cambodia. Rice production is the main income generator. It is a largely rural area.
- Kampot is in the south of the country, on the coast. Fishing and rice production are the main jobs. Salt production is a major source of income in this area.
- Takeo is an inland province in the south. Agriculture, mainly rice production, is the chief source of livelihood.



It is within this geographic, demographic, and socio-economic situation, that informal school fees were examined. The study asks more questions about parental perceptions regarding the payment of informal school fees. It also breaks down answers by grade ranges 1 to 3, 4 to 6 and 7 to 9, to show how costs may differ as pupils progress through grades.

It should be noted that this report should not be seen as necessarily representative of the whole of Cambodia. As an example, in our study, the average number of children was 4; the national average for Cambodia is 5.5. There are other issues like this throughout the study. However, we believe that it does reflect the situation overall in Cambodia and can generate certain conclusions about the scale and practice of charging informal school fees.

The findings can be used as a basis for making comparisons with other provinces in terms of household expenditures on informal school fees for basic education, as well as with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The results may also serve as a basis for formulating sound and realistic policies responsive to the stated aim of the Royal Government of Cambodia, to provide free basic education to all, by the year 2015.

D. Research Methodology

As a community-based research project this study is intended to reveal what is happening at the grass-roots level. The previous findings in Kampong Cham together with these four new provinces will give a sampling picture of the extent of informal school fees being paid throughout Cambodia.

Interviews were conducted among 210 respondent families. The sample size offers data that represents a range of families in terms of geography—urban, rural and remote—and socio-economic status. Although some families had children in Grades 10, 11 and 12, for the purposes of this study, data were analysed only on school fees paid for children in Grades 1-9.

Monitoring was conducted in local areas. Four areas were selected based on the relative concentration of disadvantaged children, the presence of NGO partners in the local areas able to conduct the research and the cooperation of local government units.

The purpose of monitoring at the local level was to get reliable figures on the core indicators, so that a picture at the provincial level could be assessed. The monitoring will also later facilitate profiling, programming and targeting of policy issues and discussion to ensure appropriate interventions are implemented to address specific concerns.

Finally, the study was also designed to ensure local follow up advocacy initiatives. The monitoring results can serve as the local database on education, which can be sustained and continuously updated for EFA tracking up to 2015.

I. Research Respondents

The research respondents were parents or guardians, with children who were enrolled in school.[11] Parents/guardians were targeted since they are the ones who supply the children with daily money and take care of other school-related expenses incurred during the course of the year. They are often the primary earners for the family, so they are also the ones who will feel the impact of the cost of sending children to school.

The research also determined parents' perceptions of the reason they were paying informal schools fees. It also aimed to find out what the opportunity costs were, both to them and to the entire family, of sending their children to school.

The responses from the children were also important sources of information, as they often know the details of the actual spending. They also talked about their daily interaction with teachers and school regarding the money they are required to pay. Most money related questions were addressed to students who were currently attending school. Respondents also included children who had dropped out and they were asked the reasons they left school.

The way that the sample was selected excluded particular groups. For example, researchers were aware that the study did not cover certain vulnerable children who may not have access to schooling or to parental or guardian assistance to pay informal school fees. Because researchers only talked to families with children, these cases were not represented.

However, the issue of vulnerable children, often orphaned to HIV/AIDS must not be forgotten. Those children who are without a framework of family support, or often in the case of HIV/AIDS, those

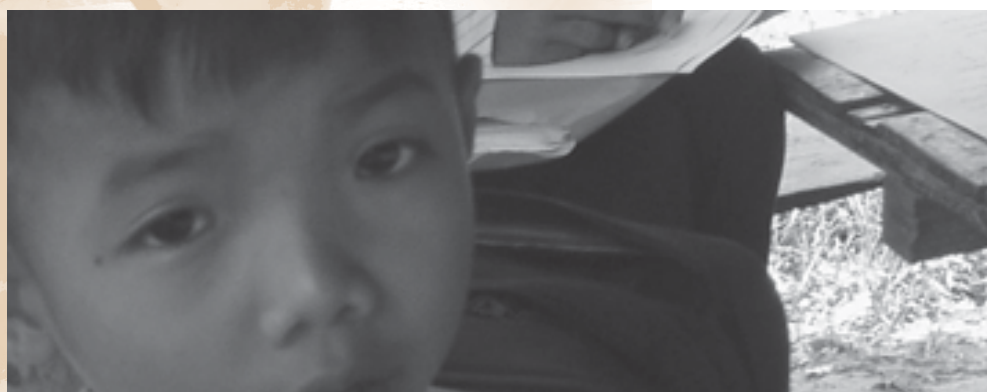
who might be excluded from the community, suffer even more from not being able to pay informal school fees. Because of the stigma still attached to the disease, children affected by it may be subjected to the worst forms of child labour. Yet they also have increased responsibilities in terms of supplementing family income by participating in income- generating activities. More often than not, they will be trying to work in order to simply pay school fees, yet their work will mean that they have to be absent from school, leading to a cycle of repetition and eventual dropout. [12]

Table 1. Distribution of respondents per province

No	Province	Frequency	Percent
1	Phnom Penh	84	40
2	Battambang	63	30
3	Kampot	21	10
4	Takeo	42	20
Total		210	100

2 Survey Instrument

A structured questionnaire was used to gather the necessary data. It was administered in face-to-face interviews and responses were recorded by an interviewer. Some questions were closed-ended and mostly related to family profile and amounts of family income spent on school-related items. Other questions were more open-ended and were related to the impacts of informal school fees on families, and their decisions regarding their children's education. Interviewers were also instructed to ask additional questions, in situations where the information might be of additional interest for anecdotal comment.



3. Anecdotal Evidence

Focus group discussions were also organized in each province. These allowed for a more in-depth discussion around topics such as school accessibility, school fees, community participation and parent's perception about the fees, which were usually collected by the teacher and/or the school itself.

To complement the findings from the survey, the interviewers also collected anecdotal information from individual respondents they found interesting and relevant. This anecdotal information has been inserted in boxes in parts of the full report where the findings are related or complementary to the survey data. A copy of the full report is available upon request from NEP.

E. Findings on Profile of Respondent Families

I. Family Size

The data shows that the most families had between four to six members, with the mean score indicating that over five was the average. Family size is defined by immediate family only; members of the extended family were not included for the purposes of this study.

The number of children in each family of respondents ranged from one to eight children. The majority of the families in all provinces had between three and four children. The mean scores in all strata imply that most of the respondent families had an average number of three children, other than in Takeo, where the average was four. In Phnom Penh, there was a high incidence of families with only one or two children. No differentiation between infants and children were made. The respondent's families were not representative of the national average of 5.5 children per family in Cambodia.



About 87% of the parents/guardians had children living with them (174 families), while 13% (27 families) had children living away from them. This indicates that quite a high percentage of children of school-age migrate from their hometowns. Usually the migrating children are older and they leave their home for a variety of reasons, mainly economic.

2. Family Incomes

The data indicates that the most common occupation of the respondent parents was farming. Given that 85% of Cambodia's population is rural, this is not a surprising figure. Closely second were those who operate a small business (18.6%). The large percentage of those that indicated "worker" shows that manufacturing is a growing industry in Cambodia. A large number of respondents indicated a second job, such as farmer and small business owner – this reflects the seasonality of work in Cambodia and relatively small incomes.

The data revealed that about half or 50.7% of the families had two members earning for the family. Either both parents were earning, or one parent and an older child were working to supplement the family income. Given the estimate that 25% of households in Cambodia are headed by a female[13], it is not surprising that older children would be required to work to help support the family.

The monthly income of respondent parents ranged from below 100,000R (\$24), which is less than \$1 a day, to more than 800,000R (\$195). The overall average was 430,175R (\$104.92). The average monthly income of families in Phnom Penh is 666,631R or \$162, much higher than in other areas and triple the average in Kampot. In Takeo, only one family earned more than 500,000R.

3. Participation in Education

The number of children in school ranged from one to six per family. The majority of the families in all areas were sending two children to school. Just over 30% of families were sending three children to school.



NEP local partner in Takeo collecting data about informal school fees in Tramkok district, Takeo province.

A little over half of the school-age children were attending primary school (58% in grades 1 to 6). However, the figures of those attending lower secondary school are very high at 42%, they reflecting the national average of all those children who are attending grades 7 to 9.

The data revealed that 42% of all respondent families had a child who had dropped out. Of this percentage, 33 children were currently aged between 7 and 17. Of these 33 children, 19 (57%) were girls. A further 285 people had dropped out historically within families, but were now over the age of 17.

F. The Costs to Parents of Sending Children to School

Parents were asked how much money they gave each day to cover school-related costs and whether this amount varied. Many indicated that they sent additional money for special items throughout the year. These costs were often related to food and snacks, which are sometimes supplied by teachers. Children are expected to buy these snacks in order to help supplement the incomes of teachers.

The survey data shows that families gave an average of 1,360R (\$0.33) per day to each child. There is a wide range between the minimum amounts of 133R escalating to 8,500R. The difference between Takeo province and Phnom Penh is noticeable – a mean of 447R in Takeo and 2,015R in Phnom Penh. This money was being used by the children to pay for school-related costs such as food and snacks, parking fees and in some cases extra classes. While these costs may appear minimal, when aggregated, they can represent a cost

that is simply too much for parents to bear, particularly if they are putting more than one child through school.

Most of the respondent families in this study have, on average, three children. Data shows that every family in Phnom Penh was spending 4,490R on daily allowance.

While the amounts of pocket money parents spend ranged from less than 2,000R to as much as 17,000R a day, this reflects, among other things, parents' different economic situations as well as the differences in costs between lower and higher grades, and urban and rural districts.

However, these are not the only costs incurred by parents to send their children to school.

The study found that costs could be broken down into roughly four areas:

- **Daily costs** for food and parking
- **School fees** for private tutoring, teacher fees, lesson handouts and exam papers.
- **Start up costs** for school uniforms, study materials and school registration.
- **Additional costs** for items such as study and class supplies, bike maintenance, gifts for teachers and ceremonies, water, electricity and garbage disposal.

I. Daily costs

Table 2 presents the annual costs for food and parking per child: on average 195,800R (\$47.77). Parents pay a large portion of their income on food. Bray mentions that the cost of food and snacks is one that parents would have to pay anyway. However, much of the anecdotal evidence points to the fact that teachers often provide these snacks and are dependent on the sale of these items to supplement their small salaries. Some children reported that failure to purchase snacks from teachers could negatively affect their grades. The cost of feeding a child at home may be considerably cheaper than snacks purchased at retail rates.

Table 2. Daily costs for a child per year, grade 1-9 (in riels)

Cost	PNP	BTB	Kampot	Takeo	Average	\$USD
Food	253,952	146,100	150,663	95,461	179,289	43.73
Parking	24,755	13,350	22,579	798	16,585	4.04
Total	278,706	159,450	173,242	96,259	195,874	47.77
USD	67.98	38.89	42.25	23.48	47.77	

Note: All costs are shown in Cambodian riels. Where US dollars are used, the exchange rate of US\$1 = 4,100R has been applied.

2. School Fees

Table 3 shows the amount of expenses paid by students for teacher fees, private tutoring fees, lesson handouts, and exam papers. Data reveals that private tutoring expenses constituted 72% of the total school fees, and daily teacher fees constituted 14%, whilst lesson hand-outs were 10% and exam papers were 4%.

Teacher fees represented a sum that got paid daily, generally handed by the child to the teacher. In mainly rural areas, there was no evidence of teacher fees being paid (Takeo, grades 1 to 6; Battambang, grades 1 to 3). However, in Phnom Penh, these fees were extremely high for all grade levels – on average 50,000R per child, per year.

The bulk of school fee payments went to teachers who conducted private classes. These classes sometimes took place on the school premises and sometimes took place in private classrooms set up in the community. On average, families paid 109,136R per year for school fees. In Phnom Penh, these costs were much higher – 141,632R, whilst they were lower in rural areas (Battambang and Kampot – on average 111,094R; Takeo, much lower at 22,868).

Students reported that the lessons covered in private tutoring were often a continuation of the public curriculum rather than supplementary. If students did not attend the private classes they would miss out on necessary parts of the State curriculum and often fall behind the rest of the class. Sometimes the focus of the private lessons would be preparation for exams and students who cannot pay for private tutoring invariably do poorly on the exams and are often required to repeat the grade.

Bray noted that, while private tutoring has become an accepted part of the educational system in Cambodia, "It has far-reaching

consequences.” For children who cannot afford the extra tutoring, the consequences for poor children who cannot pay include coercion and punishment, and for those students whose parents cannot afford these extra classes, eventual failure and early dropout. Bray also notes that parents in Cambodia have come to accept the practice of extra tutoring. Given the current level of salaries paid to teachers by the state system, they are often sympathetic towards the economic realities of teachers.

Table 3. School fees per child per year, grade 1-9 (in riels)

Cost	PNP	BTB	Kampot	Takeo	Total	\$USD
Food	253,952	146,100	150,663	95,461	179,289	43.73
Teacher fees	49,879	3,450	5,337	1,064	21,208	5.17
Private Tutoring	141,632	121,200	100,989	22,868	109,136	26.62
Lesson handouts	36,850	1,603	6,956	2	15,506	3.78
Exam paper	9,084	4,021	7,543	18	5,662	1.38
Total	237,445	130,275	120,825	23,953	151,513	36.95
USD	57.91	31.77	29.47	5.84	36.95	

3. Start-up Costs

School start up costs fall into the following three areas:

- 1. school uniforms:** daily uniforms, sportswear, and shoes;
- 2. study materials:** school bags, notebooks, notebook covers, and writing implements; and
- 3. school registration fees:** registration forms, photographs, study record booklets, fees for sports, and other costs

Daily uniforms were the most substantial costs and ranged from less than 15,000R to a maximum of 48,000R per year. Most families in Phnom Penh spent around 36,000R for this item. The majority of the families in rural areas spent roughly 25,000R. Shoes were also relatively expensive. Sportswear cost less, other than in Phnom Penh. Of the total cost of school uniforms, 64% was spent on student uniform, 31% on

shoes and 5% on sportswear. Some families reported that they could not afford to pay for some of these items. In particular some reported they could not afford sportswear, which in some instances meant their child was unable to participate in sports activities depending on the decision of the teacher.

The cost of study materials included purchases of school bags, notebooks, notebook covers, and writing implements. The cost of these items increased as children progressed through grades, because they often needed more materials, sometimes more sophisticated ones. Costs in Phnom Penh were much higher – roughly double those of rural areas, and reflected the higher cost of living in the capital. About 44% of the total cost of study materials was for notebooks and notebook covers; 36% for student bags, and; 20% for writing implements. In some cases, low income families reported that they did not buy their child a satchel to carry their books and their children used a plastic bag instead.

School registration fees included payment for registration forms, photographs, study record booklets, sporting costs and other costs, such as utilities. Registration forms were usually given free but sometimes students had to pay for them. Having teachers fill out the forms can cost an additional 600R. The data also shows that the majority of the parents payed 2,500R for photographs. Schools require a photo for the ID cards of students and other forms like the study record booklet and registration form.

The study record booklet costs about 1,000R. These booklets record the student's progress in class and allow teachers to report student's progress to parents. Some families reported that the school did charge for the booklet, while others said the booklet was free, but they were charged for the plastic cover. Most students said that there was also a monthly fee of between 300R and 500R, paid to the teacher for filling in the booklet, to send home to their parents.

Sports and other costs are within the region of 2,800R and can include a fee for undertaking sporting activity. However, a fee is often charged for garbage collection and for utilities (water and electricity).

In summary, Table 4 shows the total start-up costs incurred by families in all areas broken down by school uniform, study materials, and school registration. Costs generally rise as a child progresses through the grades. The amount of start up costs for each grade range rises by 40% from grades 1 to 3 up to 4 to 6, and then by 53% when a child transfers to lower secondary school (grade 7). Costs again

escalate in Phnom Penh and other urban areas – by almost as much as 50% for each cost, compared with the nearest rural-based cost.

Table 4. Start-up costs for a child's schooling per year, grade 1-9 (in riels)

Cost	PNP	BTB	Kampot	Takeo	Total	\$USD
Student uniform	58,087	37,929	36,054	39,843	45,456	11.09
Study materials	37,342	19,987	16,549	16,986	25,683	6.26
School registration	11,251	5,168	4,082	1,840	6,696	1.63
Total (Riel)	106,679	63,084	56,686	58,669	77,836	18.98
Total (USD)	26.02	15.39	13.82	14.31	18.98	

Of the total start-up costs, school uniform constituted 58% of the total; study materials, 33%, and; school registration, 9%. As these were usually one time purchases, made at the beginning of the school year, the initial cost of these items may present a cost barrier to poor families in sending their children to school in the first instance.

4. Additional costs

Additional costs cover study supplies, class supplies, bike maintenance, gifts for teachers and ceremonies. These are occasional fees that children must pay throughout the year. The data reveals that on average, most families spent below 7,000R for study supplies. Class supplies cost about 1,300R while bike maintenance can average 6,500R. Gifts for teachers cost on average 1,500R although it was found that in some provinces, this was not common practice in grades 1 to 6. Contributions made for ceremonies cost on average 2,200R per child per year.

The research also showed that there were other additional costs depending on the school and the teacher. Table 5 demonstrates that while these costs are occasional, they are nevertheless substantial. On average these additional costs ranged from 14,300 to 22,700R a year per child.

In summary, families in urban areas spend, on average, more than families in rural areas for these additional costs. This may simply reflect the ability of families in different areas to pay for these extras. The

differences in these additional fees also varied from province to province.

Table 5. Miscellaneous costs per child, per year (riels), grade 1-9 (in riels)

Cost	PNP	BTB	Kampot	Takeo	Total	\$USD
Study supplies	8,915	6,298	8,904	2,437	6,919	1.69
Class supplies	2,299	469	18	1,317	1,272	0.31
Bike maintenance	3,091	5,450	12,089	12,362	6,566	1.60
Gift for teacher	3,074	459	1,228	640	1,592	0.39
Ceremony	2,942	1,670	463	2,840	2,226	0.54
Total (Riel)	20,321	14,347	22,702	19,596	18,575	4.53
(USD)	4.96	3.50	5.54	4.78	4.53	

For many children, these additional costs can cause problems if they are unpaid. One example was the cost for a grade in a “manual production” class. The teacher awarded a grade that was dependent on the amount of items purchased for the teacher by each student. The original concept of manual production was that students would learn to manually make or produce something in the classroom as part of life skills course. However, in at least one school this activity has changed over time from a manual skill-building activity into an opportunity for the teacher to receive items from the market, paid for by the students.

G. The Impact of School Fees on Family Expenditures

The total informal school fees expenditure for parents to send one child to a public primary and lower secondary school are on average 443,800R (\$108.24) or 8.6% of family average annual income (See Table 6). The data reveals that parents in Phnom Penh spend as much as 643,152R (\$157) yearly to send one child to school. The amount represents 8.1% of their annual income. Other families in rural areas may spend much less, such as in Takeo where they spend 198,477R (\$48). Still, this represents 6.8% of their annual income.

Table 6. Total informal school fees per child per year, grade 1-9 (in riels)

Province	Average Yearly Income	Grade	Start-up	School Fees	Daily cost	
PNP	7,999,571 (\$ 1,951)	1-3	71,364	94,724	190,171	
		4-6	91,323	194,117	263,140	
		7-9	147,574	389,629	365,230	
		1-9	106,679	237,445	278,706	
BTB	3,763,200 (\$ 918)	1-3	39,559	43,945	98,853	
		4-6	51,458	58,742	107,942	
		7-9	91,017	215,188	219,529	
		1-9	63,084	130,275	159,450	
Kampot	2,457,143 (\$ 599)	1-3	30,674	21,595	135,474	
		4-6	40,000	77,400	106,200	
		7-9	85,173	219,224	236,808	
		1-9	56,686	120,825	173,242	
Takeo	2,907,143 (\$ 709)	1-3	35,961	20,173	74,100	
		4-6	57,599	7,800	75,771	
		7-9	85,700	39,284	135,871	
		1-9	58,669	23,953	96,259	
Mean	5,162,103 (\$ 1,259)	1-3	49,362	55,435	132,133	
		4-6	69,027	112,536	171,732	
		7-9	105,812	251,717	261,376	
		1-9	77,836	151,513	195,874	

These expenditures increase depending on how many children parents have enrolled in school. There are few, if any, economies of scale if more than one child from the family attends school; the costs simply increase commensurately.

The largest cost increases are seen at the transition point to lower secondary school. Costs rise, in all provinces, on average by 75% from the previous grade. It can be seen that this would be a huge barrier for children to access the lower secondary school or grade 7 to 9.

H. Lost opportunities to families and children

Researchers asked both parents and children questions about the realities of having to make decisions about pulling children out of school. In her study of children who dropped out of school, in the province of Kampot, Katherine Roberts found that extra costs for school was the number one reason given for children dropping out. Other reasons given were the distance from home to school and working to help their families. Roberts study also indicated that 56% of the children interviewed, who had already dropped out of school, said they wanted to go back to school.

The current research confirms Roberts' findings. Parents and children cited poverty and lack of money to pay school expenses as the number one factor in the decision for a child to drop out of school. Other reasons given were a child failing exams, the need for the child to earn money for the family, and the child's lack of interest in school. Some children reported the double-bind of having to earn the money themselves to go to school and then lacking the time to attend on a regular basis.



I. Realities of Out-of-School Children

Table 7 presents the incidence of school dropouts and the reasons for quitting school. There are many factors causing students to quit school. Most often, students leave school because their family is too poor and no longer able to afford the fees associated with attending. Of those interviewed 63% said their child dropped out of school for economic reasons. Many said they lacked money to pay daily school fees and to pay for extra tutoring.

As reported by many families, success in school is often dependent on the child's ability to pay for extra tutoring outside of regular school hours. Those students who cannot afford to pay for these extra classes more often fail the examinations and are required to repeat the grade. These failures leave them also feeling that they have no intelligence or ability to meet the school requirements. This in turn prevents them from finishing their basic education and condemns them, in the long-run, to low paying unstable jobs.

Table 7. Causes of Quitting from School

Causes of children quitting from school	Freq.	%
Parent is poor and no ability to pay	26	63
Children helps family to earn money	10	24
No ability to study because of illness, disability, and mentality	5	12
Total answers	41	100

Out-of-school children are engaged in different activities to help augment the family income, such as farming, employment in garments factories, selling, and doing house. Many children quit schooling at grades 6 and 9, which suggest that young boys and girls aged 12 to 15 years start to find a job to help the family earn a living. Boys tend to drop out to help their parents on the family farm or engage in income-generating activities that will contribute to family income while girls often drop out to help with household duties and childcare and also to generate income by working at garment factory.

J. Conclusions and Recommendations

I. Conclusions

- Education provides access for every citizen to gain better jobs; it promotes exercise of human rights and eliminates poverty.
- Most families confirm that informal school fees in basic education happens almost everywhere in the surveyed areas, urban or rural, but the amounts differed in terms of economic status of family and the grade level of the children.
- One-quarter of parents were not aware of the government policy on free education; parents do not question that they have to contribute a lot to send a child to public school, and they are even willing to share some costs as well.
- The poor and disadvantaged children suffer the most in this situation.
- This study can be used for further policy discussion for improving access to education.

2. Recommendations

1. To tackle the problem of informal school fees and their negative effects on families and children, and to come up with appropriate policy actions, there is need to identify the causes of the problems and other related issues further, such as what should be addressed first and who should do what.
2. All key actors, especially government, donor agencies, NGOs/CSOs, community, should come together and see what policy measures are in place that can be used to address this, and what else should be done to eliminate all form of informal school fees.
3. Government should consider decisive measures to eliminate all forms of fees in basic education.
4. NGOs/CSOs and communities have to join together to scrutinize the state of education and demand better governance, accountability, and transparency.
5. The donor community has to identify a clearer role for itself on how to facilitate aid effectiveness by ensuring good governance, by continuing to facilitate to make space for CSOs engagement and by raising concerns for policy discussion.
6. Lastly, minimum wages for teacher need to be set at a level that will allow them a decent living and prevent them resorting to means of raising funds that are abusive and exploitative.

Endnotes:

- [1] <http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/cbj2003/ane/kh/> .In Cambodia, grades 1 to 6 are primary/basic education; grades 7 to 9 are lower secondary education/basic education.
- [2] Royal Government of Cambodia, Education for All National Plan, 2003-2015.
- [3] Katherine Roberts: Why children drop out of primary school in Kampot province, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), 2006.
- [4] Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, Education Strategic Plan 2006-2010.
- [5] Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Education Sector Support Program 2006-2010.
- [6] Informal school fees refer to basic education costs incurred by parents in sending their children to school. These are start-up costs, school fees, daily fees, and additional expenses. **Start-up costs** are costs which are incurred in order for a child to start attending school, such as a school uniform, basic study materials and school registration fees. **Daily costs** comprise the amount of money spent by parents for the daily expenses of their children in school such as food, parking, and transportation. **School fees** refers to teacher fees, private tutoring fees, lesson handouts, and sample examination papers. **Additional costs** include study and class supplies, bike maintenance, gifts for teachers and ceremonies.
- [7] Bray, Mark, The private costs of public schooling: household and community financing of primary education in Cambodia, International Institute of Education Planning/UNESCO, August 1999, p. 76-77.
- [8] http://www.moc.gov.kh/national_data_resource
- [9] Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE), EFA05 - Must do Better: A "School Report" for 14 Developing countries in Asia Pacific to investigate their commitment to Basic Education, ASPBAE and GCE, India, 2005.
- [10] NEP was set up in 2000 following discussions between government and NGOs. NEP provides a mechanism to promote dialogue among its own members and between government, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, donors, and NGOs in order to improve the quality of education for all in a spirit of cooperation.
- [11] Throughout this document, we use the term parents and guardians interchangeably to reflect the fact that many children in Cambodia are looked after by members of their extended family.
- [12] Source of information: Cissy Kinaawa, HIV/AIDS Adviser, VSO Cambodia
- [13] <http://www.moc.gov.kh>



(Continued from inside front cover)

RWS found the need for pursuing a vigorous, evidence-based policy advocacy to build shared understanding and rally civil society organizations (CSOs) around common goals, establish credibility with opinion-framers and decision-makers, marshal evidence as part of a systematic strategy to influence policy, and supply missing data on excluded and unreached sectors. Campaign calls and messages needed to be supported by credible evidence, based on the real state of education in communities.

Asia-South Pacific Education Watch Initiative and Publications

These publications are the result of education watch processes initiated and pursued since 2006 by the RWS programme of ASPBAE and GCE, in partnership with national education coalitions from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.

Building on the successful Education Watch model implemented by CAMPE in Bangladesh, the Asia-South Pacific Education Watch (EdWatch) was designed and coordinated by the RWS Steering Committee composed of ASPBAE, Education International, and GlobalMarch Against Child Labor, and the RWS Asia Pacific staff.

EdWatch has emerged as an independent, citizen-based monitoring mechanism for assessing the status of education at the regional, national, and local levels, providing well-founded bases for advocacy and education campaign work and strengthening CSO capacities for policy engagement in education. It is designed to track governments' progress in achieving quality education for all, with focus on addressing the education deficit for disadvantaged sectors.

All Edwatch reports are independent reports and do not necessarily reflect the views of all the members of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

Challenge to Civil Society

The daunting education situation in the region poses a challenge to CSOs to sound a clear wake-up call to governments to shake off their complacency, go beyond rhetoric, summon the political will, and redouble efforts. There is a crying need to assess existing education programmes, allocate more funds and resources for education, and institute targeted measures to address education disadvantage.

Since Dakar 2000, CSO participation in EFA processes has seen the progressive growth in strength and maturity of national education coalitions, and their developing capacity to conduct research and policy analysis and advocacy. Armed with their EdWatch findings, CSOs and education stakeholders can put together more coherent education policy agenda for lobbying, disseminate information to enhance public awareness of education issues, effectively engage governments in education planning and policy-making, and strongly assert and sharpen CSO and stakeholders' participation in education governance at all levels.



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